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April 26, 2010

Representative Deborah Kennedy  
Michigan House of Representatives  
Lansing, MI

I commend you for the sponsorship of HB 5699 to amend 1961 PA236, entitled "Revised judicature act of 1961" and for the House Hearing on April 28, 2010. This legislation is urgently needed in Michigan. It will enable an individual who was sexually abused prior to age 18 to bring a civil action up to 30 years after turning 18, or within 2 years after HB2699 becomes law, whichever is later.

As a practicing social worker for more than 50 years I know that childhood sexual abuse is a very serious and prevalent problem with lifelong negative consequences for the victim. Unfortunately less than 10% report their abuse to authorities, and when they do, years typically have elapsed. Children are afraid to report such abuse or are threatened by the perpetrator. In some instances that I have seen child victims, especially when they are adolescents, end up institutionalized in foster care or even the juvenile justice system because of the suffering they have experienced. I have known several young women victims who have attempted suicide while the perpetrator remains free in the community.

Far too many child predators have hidden behind the statute of limitations that protects abusers and allows them to continue their predatory criminal behavior. Many states have already passed legislation to address this problem with very successful results ( e.g. Delaware). Michigan's children and adults deserve similar protection.

Please take action to see that HB 5699 is passed as soon as possible and also encourage your Senate colleagues to introduce and pass a companion bill.

Sincerely yours,

Rosemary C. Sarri

CC: Bill Sponsors  
Members of the House Judiciary Committee